GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:965
ANSWERED ON:25.11.2002
AMENDMENTS TO FORESTRY LAWS
GAJENDRA SINGH RAJUKHEDI;TARACHAND BHAGORA

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that the stringent rules and laws of the Forest Department have caused disruption of developmental work in many States and are an impediment to the implementation of important schemes relating to construction of roads etc;

(b) if so, whether the Government are considering to amend these laws keeping in view the need of fulfilment of essential and fundamental needs of the people;

(c) if so, the details indicating the time by which these laws are likely to be amended; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R.BAALU)

(a) The rules/laws referred to in the question pertain to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. This Act was enacted to restrict indiscriminate diversion of forest land for non-forestry purpose and provides for conservation of forests and matters connected therewith. As per the provisions of the Act, prior approval of the Central Government is necessary for diversion of any forest land for non-forestry purpose/developmental works including construction of roads. Since 1980, more than 8000 proposals involving diversion of about 5.76 lakh hectares of forest land have been approved for various non-forestry activities/developmental works.

(b) to (d) The Act does not prohibit taking up of any developmental work if required on forest land but tends to regulate such use of forest land with certain stipulated conditions. This Act being regulatory and not prohibitory in nature is flexible enough to allow important developmental activities on forest lands and as such no change or amendment in the Act is contemplated.